

REMARKS

Claims 1-11, 17-23, 43, 45, 49-82, 86-90, 95-102, and 108-133 have been examined. Claims 17 and 19-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), and the Examiner has indicated that claims 1-11, 18, 22, 23, 43, 45, 49-82, 86-90, 95-102, and 108-133 contain allowable subject matter.

I. Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over U.S. Patent No. 6,030,070 to Barinaga (“Barinaga”) and JP Patent Publ. No. 11-005311 to Takao et al. (“Takao”)

Claims 17 and 19-21 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Barinaga and Takao.

A. Claim 17

Applicants submit that claim 17 is patentable over the cited references. Nonetheless, to expedite prosecution, Applicants have incorporated the allowable subject matter of claim 18 into claim 17.

B. Claims 19-21

Since claims 19-21 directly or indirectly depend upon claim 17, Applicants submit that the claims are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency.

II. Objection to claims 18, 22, and 23

The Examiner has objected to claims 18, 22, and 23 for being dependent upon a rejected base claim but acknowledges that they contain allowable subject matter. Since claim 18 has been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, the objection to the claim is moot. Also, since

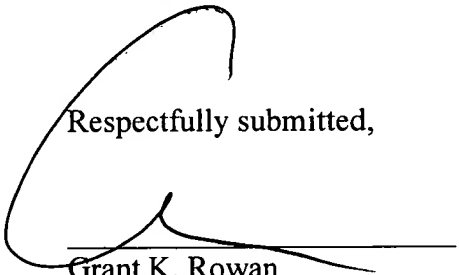
claims 22 and 23 directly or indirectly depend upon base claim 17, Applicants submit that the objection to these claims is likewise overcome.

III. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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